

REMARKS

Claims 5-17 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, Claim 5 is amended. Favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested in light of the following Remarks.

The Office Action rejects Claims 5-17 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Kreuzer et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,901,976, hereinafter "Kreuzer") in view of Phillion et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,590,903, hereinafter "Phillion"). The rejection is respectfully traversed.

Applicant gratefully acknowledges the courtesies extended to Applicant's representative during the November 12, 2003 telephone Interview. During the Interview, it was agreed that replacing the term "adjoining" in Claim 5 to "contacting" defines patentable subject matter over the applied art, taken singly or in combination.

For at least this reason, Claim 5 is allowable over the applied art, taken singly or in combination. Claims 6-9, which depend from Claim 5, are likewise allowable over the applied art, taken singly or in combination. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Independent claim 10 specifies, *inter alia*, a lining for columns of automobiles including the feature of at least one opening area covering an airbag, wherein the at least one opening area is formed of a unitary layer and comprises a first material having a first hardness, except for a hinge area comprising a second material having a second hardness being different than said first hardness.

Kreuzer appears to disclose an airbag lid 1 comprising a lower layer 2 of soft and resilient plastic and an outer layer 3 of hard plastic. Layers 2 and 3 are essentially fastened together adhering *totally* surface to surface. *Col. 2, lines 3-8 (Emphasis Added)*.

Phillion appears to disclose an air bag 12 that is part of an air bag module 20 that is mounted in an instrument panel 16. Phillion mentions that the air bag can be mounted in other parts of the vehicle, such as the doors, the pillars, the roof, and the seats. *Col. 7, lines 59-62*.

It is respectfully submitted that the combination of Kreuzer and Phillion do not disclose, teach or suggest all the claim limitations, as recited in Claim 10. Specifically, it is respectfully submitted that at least the feature of at least one opening area is formed of a unitary layer and comprises a first material having a first hardness, except for a hinge area comprising a second material having a second hardness being different than said first hardness, is not disclosed, taught or suggested. Because the combination of the cited references does not teach all the claim limitations, as recited in Claim 5, the Office action fails to establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness. See MPEP §2143.

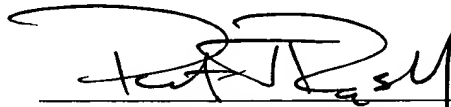
For at least this reason, Claim 10 is allowable over the applied art, taken singly or in combination. Claims 11-17, which depend from Claim 10, are likewise allowable over the applied art, taken singly or in combination.

Applicants, therefore, respectfully submit that the application is in condition for allowance. Favorable consideration and prompt allowance of the application is earnestly solicited.

Should Examiner Fleming believe anything further would be desirable in order to place the application in better condition for allowance; the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned attorney at the telephone number listed below.

It is believed that any additional fees due with respect to this paper have already been identified. However, if any additional fees are required in connection with the filing of this paper, permission is given to charge account number 18-0013 in the name of Rader, Fishman and Grauer PLLC.

Respectfully submitted,



SIGNATURE OF PRACTITIONER

Peter J. Rashid, Reg. No. 39,464
Rader, Fishman & Grauer PLLC
39533 Woodward Ave., Ste. 140
Bloomfield Hills, MI 48304

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Customer No. 010291

Tel. No.: (248) 594-0624